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or by preparing a potion from bits of earth extracted from a termite mound. For severe headache one applies an ointment to the eyes, compounded of the dried kernels of a fruit tree, the bark from the roots of another, cloves, and powdered antimony. Sometimes headache is treated quasi-surgically, by a species of bleeding; the barber makes a number of fine incisions into the patient's forehead and then rubs a paste of dried locust-beans and natron into the cuts. The counter-irritation thus induced may well offer a temporary relief, though the bleeding itself is probably too slight to have any effect; the cure, however, has an odd conclusion, the patient's head being knocked gently three times against the wall.

Ulcers and wounds are treated with powdered bark or roots, used either dry or damp, and left on the wound for two to three days. Broken limbs are first massaged with a salve made of palm-oil and the dried and powdered leaves of a certain tree (another remedy including dirt from a hen house and charred earth from a termite mound), after which one applies a ligature of rope, using four sticks as splints. The ligature is removed after three days, but the massage with the ointment is continued. If the fracture does not heal, this treatment is followed up with a 'stronger' one, to wit, a massage with snake poison. For smallpox one gives a potion made of the pods of a certain vine growing in the bush. There is also a 'prophylactic' treatment, applied when an epidemic is threatening; it consists either in drinking an infusion of the bark of the locust-bean tree, boiled together with some grains of sorghum or millet, or in fumigating the house, at night, by burning certain herbs. Pounded hibiscus seeds, taken like snuff, are given to patients suffering from asthma. For fever accompanied by rigor (malaria?) one drinks the boiled juice of the pawpaw mixed with natron; a more 'magical' cure consists in inhalations of the fumes from three ingredients burned together in an old, broken pot (never a new one)—a powdered herb, the swamp plant mentioned before, and twigs taken from a vulture's nest. We shall meet again with this predilection for old pots when discussing the medicines of the *cigbeci* experts; the vulture plays a part also in another remedy of the barber-doctors, applied to sore eyes: they are bathed in ash-water mixed with a pulverized vulture's leg. Other herbal concoctions are used in the treatment of gonorrhœa (called *tswashi*), syphilis (called *tunjeri*), and sleeping sickness; these remedies are similar in that the first two are said to increase the typical secretion until 'the whole disease leaves the body', while the last brings on diarrhœa, the germs of the disease being passed with the stool. Lunacy of a non-violent nature may be treated by means of inhalations, repeated several times day and night, or by

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will often know and apply different ones. Also, some specialize in potions or in poultices and lotions; others prefer treatment by means of inhalations, which the Nupe call *turare* (a Hausa word, meaning 'scent' or 'fumigation'). Certain more versatile experts know several remedies for the same illness, which they would try out one after the other. The position is summed up in this statement of a famous Bida 'doctor': 'Sometimes one medicine proves sufficient; but there is only one way of discovering the right one—to experiment and trust in God.' Certain barber-doctors, too, are specialists in particular diseases and are known as such. Thus only two men in Bida knew how to treat lunacy and only one Bida barber (whom I met in Ibadan, where he was staying at the time) knew how to treat sleeping sickness; similarly, there were specialists for venereal diseases, for eye complaints, and so forth. For certain ailments there are no treatments; their list includes blindness, idiocy, leprosy, elephantiasis, deafness, 'incurable syphilis', and, oddly enough, the common cold; my informants made it quite clear that the last was too trifling a complaint to deserve the attention of 'doctors'.

As we have seen, surgical treatments are almost entirely absent, and the use of splints in fractures is considered no more important than the application of some 'strong' salve or ointment. The barbers, in fact, herbalists at heart, deprecate the 'use of the knife' and emphatically deny its value. Said the head of the barbers' guild: 'The knife begets pain; how could it cure?' Though the same few herbs or plants appear in the majority of remedies, this does not mean that they alone have curative properties. On the contrary, it is considered that all plants contain some medicine, even if its nature or extraction are not known. It is considered equally certain that this medical knowledge, far from being static, is growing all the time, so that the barbers today possess medicines unknown even a short time ago. Once more, this is a question of experimenting 'with the help of God', and there are certain rough rules how to proceed. One tries first the bark of a plant or tree not hitherto used; if this proves worthless, one tries the roots, and finally the leaves or fruits. As to why certain parts of plants should contain *cigbe* and others not, there is no answer; or rather the usual answer is '*cigbe u de 'tsu a*', 'medicines have no king' (that is, follow no proclaimed law): God has made them so, and men can only hope to learn by trial and error or by accepting the wisdom of others.

A strikingly large number of remedies employ plant parasites (called *etú*), and their special medicinal properties are strongly emphasized. If the alien growth of the parasites once suggested to the people some affinity with the nature of diseases and hence a

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and neighbours first before consulting the accredited experts. One does not pay in money for this kind of assistance, but only offers a small return gift of kolanuts or food. The household remedies are mainly laxatives, or cures for toothache, headache, and slight wounds or bruises, though they include also certain crude treatments to induce abortion or prevent pregnancy—by sucking frogs or drinking the blood from the afterbirth. Normally, one uses infusions of common plants, ash-water or natron (both known as laxatives), ointments made of palm-oil or sheanut-butter, or damp earth (applied to cuts and the like); the more complex herbal concoctions and the use of bark and roots, which make up the *cigbe* proper, are entirely absent.

Certain individuals, are known to possess this more 'professional' knowledge as well. Like the barbers, they apply therapeutic treatments in a profane and would-be rational manner, and like the *cigbeci*, practise the non-therapeutic variety with more or less conspicuous mystical intent. Their skill extends to remedies alleged to increase virility and facilitate pregnancy, though contraceptives are outside the scope of the individual practitioner. 'Fantastic' treatments, however, are not. We already mentioned one such cure meant to remove rheumatic pains through 'drawing them from the body'. Two further treatments are of special interest, one because it is empirically sound, the other because it is surgical as well as daring and involves a clear apprehension of the symptoms of a relatively obscure disease. The first example concerns the use of the severely toxic *datura stramonium*. Many Nupe are aware of the effect of the seeds or powdered leaves which produce stupor and insensitiveness, and the experts prescribe small doses, taken in water, as a cure for pains; with less justification, they also recommend the external application of the leaves, soaked in ash-water and mixed with sheanut butter, for aching limbs. The second example is an alleged cure for sleeping sickness, which must be applied in the early stages of the disease, recognized by the swelling of the neck glands. I only met one expert who knew of this treatment, a man from Mokwa, whose repute had spread far and wide. The surgical treatment involves a deep incision in the skin above the glands, charred leaves of a bean variety being rubbed into the wound; the leaves are said to have a caustic effect so that, when the treatment is repeated twice daily for a week, the glands themselves can be removed. As an after-treatment the patient is given an infusion of bark and roots to drink, and a coarse grass and fish to eat. The expert did not claim that his cure was always effective: it would still depend on 'God's will'; but he showed me a man, bearing the scars of the operation, who, he claimed, had completely recovered.

[1] [i.e., simple medicinal treatments. - Analyst]

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(that is, their *fifíngi*) from the surrounding farmlands and carry them to yours. A rich grain harvest can be obtained by taking the head of an ass or donkey, its saddle cloth, and the excreta of a person who dies of smallpox, tying the three 'ingredients' into a bundle hung from a palm-tree on the farm: the grain will then grow as high as a person, since the *fifíngi* of the donkey, used to carrying loads on its back, will endeavour to 'pull up' the grain 'like a load'. Farmers can finally prepare a potent drink made of a black monkey's left leg, some leaves driven into a heap by a whirlwind, and beer: they will then work 'as fast as the whirlwind' and as 'tirelessly as a monkey'. Ndakotsu's father is reported to have owned also one of those protective *cigbe* which punish evil-wishers; it is said to have been particularly vicious, inflicting body-ache on any person who so much as stared at you. Nothing further, however, is known about this medicine, which has since been lost.

The picture changes again when we turn to the medicines hereditary in families or 'houses' or belonging to communities. Let me quote these examples. In Jebba Island I recorded an hereditary *cigbe* called *fúnagba*, which cures headache, pains in the body, and barrenness, and can either be drunk or used externally. Its composition is complicated, including seven ingredients, six of which are roots of specific trees and the seventh the root of any tree growing across a footpath (such roots being particularly 'strong'); these ingredients must be mixed with beer, blood of fowl (that is, the common materials for sacrifices), and some Niger water fetched by a young girl. Apart from its therapeutic effect, this medicine also protects the house from thieves and evil-minded intruders. In another village on the Niger I found a medicine called *atafá*, which has only the latter effect; it could, in fact, never be renewed if it were actually dispensed since its composition is unknown. In several villages I met with a medicine called *wasa* or *gába*, compounded of ten ingredients, one of which is the boiled head of a poisonous snake, severed before it released the poison; this medicine operates as an antidote against snake-bite, as a cure for stomach-ache, and sometimes also as a potion applied in ordeals; while its presence in the house affords protection from thieves and evil-doers. A medicine called *égbo*, from Shari, is used to treat headache and stomach-ache, and is also taken by the devotees of the *ndakó gboyá* before they put on the masks that go with the cult. Then there is the Jebba medicine *zumácikã*, which belongs to the village and is believed to protect the community from smallpox; as we remember, its composition is unknown and it acts through merely being present.[1]

[1] See above, p. 91.